

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER III. FROM PLAY TO EARNEST.

"THERE is no cause for alarm, so long as you keep Mr. Northcott free from worry," Mr. Anderson was saying, as he followed Mrs. Northcott into the drawing-room.

"But, if people call, he will insist upon seeing them," she expostulated.

"Well, you must do what you can. If it worries him less to see visitors than not to see them, by all means let it be so. I must leave that to your judgement, Mrs. Northcott."

Dr. Stanhope never left anything to the judgement of anybody, and Mrs. Northcott began to regret his absence more sincerely than ever.

"I say, Anderson," said Clement, "I wish you had your flannels on."

"It is impossible to deny that you look deliciously cool in yours," was the answer; "but I am afraid such a get-up would hardly be regarded as professional."

"The fact is, Mr. Anderson," said Maud, "Clement wants to impress you for tennis. He and my cousin consider themselves invincible, and if you could help to teach them humility, it would be a good action."

"And, certainly, one that would carry its own reward, Miss Northcott. If you repeat the invitation another time, I will accept it very gladly. But I am due at the Union directly after luncheon."

"Come back, this evening," suggested Clement.

"I have a meeting about the new Eye Hospital. I dare not miss that," he

answered, and Clement accompanied him to the gate.

"Anderson will come on Monday," said Clement, upon his return.

"Auntie won't like it," answered Brownie. "You know Dr. Stanhope never plays tennis. Fancy, fat old Dr. Stanhope! I am awfully glad Mr. Anderson is coming. I suppose you won't begin until after luncheon, now, Clement."

"No," he said; "and then I must run down as far as the bank, first."

"To the bank?" exclaimed Maud.

It was hardly likely he could have any money to pay in; whereas, she was sufficiently in her brother's confidence to know that there was none he could draw out. If Mr. Northcott had been about his business as usual, she might have assumed that Clement had received a cheque from his father; this being out of the question, however, Maud was puzzled.

Luncheon over, and also the all-important journey to and from the bank, Clement was at last ready for tennis; but Maud declared it was too hot for exertion of any kind.

"You'll come, Brownie," he said. "I'll race you to the hammock. One, two, three, away!"

The hammock swung between two big apple-trees at the end of the lawn-tennis court, and, before Brownie could reach it, Clement had already thrown himself lazily on his back.

"Whew! Maud wasn't far wrong, Brownie; it is hot. By Jove, it is just past three o'clock; I wonder who has won!"

"Who has won what, Clement?"

"The Oaks, of course. Ah, I see! You thought my mind was on the apples," and he stared up at the pink blossom.

"I dare say you wish you were there,"

she said, entangling her fingers in the meshes of the net.

"To be candid, Brownie—yes, I do. But I had not cheek enough to stay in London any longer."

"In London! As if everybody did not know you had been to Epsom."

"Now look here, my dear girl," he said, throwing one leg over the side of the hammock and raising his head proportionately, "just tell me how a fellow can travel from Middleton to Epsom, by rail, without taking London on the way. Besides, Brownie, you're not such a prig as to think it's a mortal sin to go to the Derby?"

"No; but I wish you had not gone this year. Not under the circumstances."

"Well, of course, if I had guessed the pater was going to be ill, I should not have gone. But I am not a prophet, you know, Brownie."

"I did not mean because of uncle's illness," was her quiet answer. "I am afraid there is going to be another of those dreadful scenes, Clement. Auntie has found a lot of bills."

"The deuce she has!" he cried, flinging his other leg outside the hammock, and looking anxiously into her face.

"Wine merchants' bills, tailors' bills, and—and—jewellers', Clement."

He sat watching his tennis shoes, then presently began to whistle.

"I don't believe you care one bit," she said, for it is provoking to hear a person whistle when you think he ought rather to weep.

"That's where you are wrong. I care a great many bits."

"Then you take great pains to hide your feelings," she retorted. "Sometimes I wonder whether you have any to hide."

"Don't say that, Brownie," he answered, more gravely. "Don't let us fall out. We have never quarrelled yet, have we? How long is it since you first came to us? By Jove, it must be something like twelve years! Suppose we kiss and be friends on the strength of it?"

She turned away and began to pluck the blossom from the apple-tree at random.

"Aren't you going to offer me an olive-branch?—an apple-branch, at any rate?"—he continued; and, half in jest half in earnest, she tossed a piece into the hammock.

"Clement," she said, presently, "if uncle hears of those bills it would be enough to kill him. Can't you do anything? Won't the people wait?"

"Look here, Brownie," he answered, after a few moments' hesitation, "I am going to let you into a secret. Only, mind you, it is a secret. Not a soul is to know of it; not even Maud."

Thrusting his hand deep into the pocket of his flannel jacket he brought forth an elaborately-embroidered silk case, from which he took a neat roll of Bank of England notes.

"Is that enough to pay them all?" was her first enquiry.

"No, worse luck. But I intended to give fifty to one fellow, and twenty to another, and so to keep them all civil. No wonder I had such a hunt for those bills yesterday."

"But, Clement," she said, with a little embarrassment, "you speak of giving fifty pounds and twenty pounds as if you had come into a small fortune. Where did you get all that money from?"

He was slowly putting the notes back into his pocket-case, and, whether from accident or design, he did not meet her eyes.

"You don't think I stole them," he said, with a laugh that sounded rather forced.

"I got them from the bank, of course."

"Yes, but you went to London on your way to Epsom, you know, Clement. I suppose all notes come from the bank?"

"Ask no questions, hear no stories," he exclaimed, as he sprang to the ground; "then, if any one cross-examines you, you need not tell any, either. I know I am an awful fool, Brownie. Last time the governor squared things, he made me feel worse than a fool."

"But for all that——"

"I know what you would say. I have done exactly the same thing again. Why did I do it? I don't know; upon my life, I don't know. I meant to keep straight, and I didn't—that's all. I am becoming afraid of myself, Brownie. I have broken so many vows, that I am ashamed to make another—even to myself. If mother had not found those bills, I believe I might have kept the fellows quiet."

"But you have the money just the same, and, surely, if the people are paid, it will be all right. Could you not borrow the rest of the money, and pay it back by-and-by?"

"I have done all that, long ago," he replied, dismally—"all except the paying back. You see, if I pay the bills, she will be bound to know all about it. And if that is the case—at any rate, if it once

reaches the pater's ears, there will be a worse row than we have ever had yet—a hundred times worse."

He left her with these words ringing in her ears, and when Maud presently joined her, Brownie, for a wonder, declined to play.

But they all made amends on Monday afternoon for the laziness of Friday. Maud realised to her horror that she had rendered it impossible for Anderson to be the partner of any but herself. With his black coat, he seemed to have put off all his formality, together with at least ten years of his life, and Clement stood a good chance of receiving the beating which Maud had declared he needed.

So successfully had Clement thrown aside his troubles, that even Brownie, accustomed as she was to his lightness, was filled with astonishment. She had not been nearly so successful. Clement had told her either too much or too little. She would rather have heard nothing at all about those bank-notes, or have heard all about them. He could not have obtained them from his father; he had admitted they were not borrowed; whence, then, had they come?

But the demands of the game soon began to absorb all her attention.

"We only saved that set by the skin of our teeth," said Clement. "They will thrash us next time, Brownie; Anderson is a better man than I am."

This was a great admission for Clement, but his prophecy was a true one.

"One set all," exclaimed Maud, and having changed courts, she sat down for a moment's rest. Clement was swinging from one of the apple-branches, whilst Brownie stood pensively watching him.

"What a beautiful girl your cousin is," said Anderson; "at least, I am afraid I ought scarcely to venture upon such a personal remark."

"It is one I often hear," answered Maud, with frank heartiness, "and I can assure you she is as good as she looks. Have you ever noticed her eyes, Mr. Anderson? I always feel as though she could so easily mesmerise me. But there, I suppose you don't believe in mesmerism."

"Certainly not in all the trash that is talked about it," he explained. "But that mesmerism, or hypnotism, as it is better to call it, is a fact, there cannot be a shadow of doubt. As to the power of any particular pair of eyes, depend upon it, Miss

Northcott, that extends only over our hearts."

The sun shone as brightly as ever; a gentle breeze refreshed the players; and wherever the eye could rest there were beds of many-coloured flowers, over which the bees lingered with a notion of business which must have been very closely allied to pleasure.

"Four to two. Two more games like the last and we shall settle them!" cried Clement, as he sent a ball whizzing just over the top of the net to shoot along the level turf safely beneath Anderson's racquet.

But this game, begun so auspiciously, was destined never to be finished. In one moment Clement was summoned from what had been the playtime of his life to begin its battle in bitter earnest.

He was in the act of discharging another volley at Anderson, when a neatly-clad servant stepped though the open breakfast-room window.

Clement dropped his racquet; and, jumping the net, soon stood beside his sister.

"Father wishes to speak to you at once, Clement."

"I hope he is not worse," said Brownie, joining the group at the moment.

"If he had been, I am sure mother would have asked Mr. Anderson to go to him. How pale you are, Clement. Doesn't he look white, Brownie?"

"I'm all right," he said, hastily. "I was afraid something was up, that's all;" and, slipping his arms into his jacket as he went, he hastened towards the house.

Mr. Northcott lay on a couch by the window. At its head stood Mrs. Northcott, with something to trouble her in earnest for once in her life; and opposite to Mr. Northcott, his face towards the window, looking as though he would gladly have jumped out of it, was a tall, broad-shouldered man, whose clean-shaven face looked the more florid in contrast with his spotless white driving-coat. This was Sir Edward Spearing, of the Middleton Old Bank.

He respected Clement in the hunting-field as highly as Mr. Northcott in the counting-house; but, like everybody else in the town—especially everybody who was acquainted with Henry Grayson—he had heard so many reports of Clement's extravagancies, that his good opinion was modified when the hounds were not out.

When Clement's eyes fell upon Spearing,

he came to a standstill on the threshold; and even after he had recovered from his apparent surprise and had advanced to greet the banker, it seemed that he had lost his usual frankness.

"Clement," said Mr. Northcott—a grey-headed, grey-bearded man, pale from recent illness—"this is a most unpleasant piece of business, although Sir Edward is doing his best to lighten it for me. Will you show him the cheque, Sir Edward? I am told that you presented this draft at the bank on Friday afternoon," said Mr. Northcott. Is that true?" he demanded, with an evident effort at self-control.

They all waited anxiously for Clement's answer; but he stared blankly at the cheque for a moment, and then, seeing the three pair of eyes fixed upon his face, again looked at the pink slip of paper before speaking.

"Yes, father; I took the cheque to the bank."

"From whom did you receive it?" demanded Sir Edward Spearing, in obedience to Mr. Northcott's glance of entreaty.

Whatever had been Clement's faults, he had ever been outspoken, frank, and fearless; always ready to suffer himself rather than bring trouble upon another. His present hesitation told against him with great force.

"I got it from Uncle Wal," he said, presently. "He asked me to get it cashed for him last Friday, and I ran down to the bank for the money directly after luncheon. Why, is there anything wrong?" he asked, in something like his usual, careless tones.

"I have signed no such cheque," exclaimed Mr. Northcott. "It is a forgery," and he lay back on the sofa, with his eyes half closed.

"Then why did the fellow cash it?" demanded Clement, turning sharply upon Sir Edward Spearing.

"The forgery is very skilfully executed," was the answer. "In the first place, the clerk was deceived. It was only when the matter came under my notice that our suspicions were aroused. You know, Mr. Northcott, you seldom draw for so large a sum on your private account. I think you ought to send for Mr. Litton."

"Then I suppose you have done with me," said Clement with great promptness, and he was actually on the point of quitting the room when, for the first time, Mrs. Northcott brought her guns into action.

"No one shall condemn my brother and

then refuse to meet him face to face," she declared.

Clement stepped backwards; Mr. Northcott opened his eyes, and looked appealingly at Sir Edward Spearing.

"I quite agree with Mrs. Northcott," he said.

"Remain where you are, Clement," faltered his father, and Mrs. Northcott went in search of her brother.

CHAPTER IV. THE EVIDENCE

If Clement had been wanting in his usual self-possession, Mr. Litton was the personification of cool assurance. His shiny face beamed with ingenuousness; he looked as innocent as a child or a Chinaman.

"Litton," began Mr. Northcott, as Spearing handed him the draft, "this signature is a forgery. Clement tells me that he received the cheque from you on Friday; that, at your request, he cashed it the same afternoon, and handed you the money."

Mr. Northcott seemed to find difficulty in framing his sentence, but it appeared to require a far greater effort on Mr. Litton's part before he could grasp its meaning.

"What does he say? That he received it from me? That I asked him to cash a cheque? Why, I had no cheque. How could I have asked him to cash it?"

Clement instinctively doubled his fists.

It was one man's word against another's. But Clement had admitted presenting the cheque, and receiving the money; and so far the evidence appeared to be against him.

"His story won't bear a moment's consideration," continued Mr. Litton, coolly. "He tells you he cashed the cheque, and gave me the money on Friday afternoon. Everybody in the house knows—you know, Mary—that it was on Friday I was taken queer. I went to bed before luncheon, and did not leave my room the whole day."

"You miserable shuffler!" exclaimed Clement.

"Pardon me," said Sir Edward Spearing, "but before Mr. Litton entered the room, you certainly did lead us to believe that you cashed the cheque on Friday afternoon. Mr. Litton asserts that you did not see him after luncheon. How, then, could you have given him the money? It is for you to explain; and, allow me to tell you, that it is no explanation to call a man a shuffler."

"He knows that I gave him the money

before he went to his room!" thundered Clement. "I gave it to him in the study before eleven o'clock—before I went to the bank;" and he glared at Mr. Litton, who met his glance with perfect steadiness.

"Great Heaven!" cried Mr. Northcott. "Do you ask us to believe that you had two hundred pounds in your possession on Friday morning?"

"Yes, sir, I do ask you to believe that," was the answer. "He asked me to cash the cheque in the garden directly after breakfast; he said he had received it from you. He went straight to the study, and I gave him the money there and then in bank-notes."

"I believe it is scarcely your custom to carry so much money about with you," said Spearing, sarcastically. "Perhaps you will explain where you obtained such a sum?"

Aware of the normal condition of Clement's banking-account, he could speak with authority.

Before answering, Clement turned his back upon the banker, and addressed himself directly to his father.

"I was—I was at Epsom on Wednesday, sir; I won the money there. I had the tip for 'Farmer;' he started at twenty-four to one; I backed him for a tanner, and of course I won."

No one knew better than Clement his father's deeply-rooted objection to racing. There was a painful hesitation in his manner which told severely against him. He had looked for an outbreak; but, instead, there was a dismal silence, which was a thousand times worse.

"Can you furnish proof of your assertion?" demanded Sir Edward Spearing, after a whispered word with Mr. Northcott.

"Proof; how can I give you proof? I was never at the Derby before in my life. I should not know the men again if I were to see them. I give you my word, and that is all I have to give."

To bet and lose was in Mr. Northcott's opinion a perfectly easy and rational process; but to bet and win was inconceivable.

Now Clement had either won the money or he had not won it. Either he had spoken the truth about the cheque, or he had lied. If he had won the money, it was possible that he changed the cheque at the time he stated. If he had not won the money at the Derby, he

could not have given Mr. Litton two hundred pounds before himself receiving that sum from the bank.

But it was unlikely that he had won the money and forged the cheque as well. Yet his admission that he had been to the Derby and there made a bet, furnished to Mr. Northcott strong evidence of his son's guilt.

In the father's opinion the one offence was but a little more heinous than the other. If Clement could bet, he might do anything else that was bad. If he could bet, he might almost as easily commit forgery.

The silence became painful. Sir Edward Spearing's hand rested sympathetically on Mr. Northcott's shoulder; Mrs. Northcott glanced with approval at her brother. Not that she was without pity for Clement, who had been to her as a son since he was three years old; but she was proud of Mr. Litton, who, in showing that he was innocent of a despicable crime, appeared to place himself in an advantageous light.

Mr. Litton was the first to speak:

"Northcott," he said, "I have been foully slandered by your son. I must consider my own reputation. I demand that a doctor be at once sent for. Anderson is in the garden; perhaps you will send for him. He will easily convince you that it was, and is, an impossibility for me to hold a pen, much less to use one. I only want what is fair."

In vain did Spearing urge the desirability of hushing the affair up; in vain did he assure Mr. Litton that his character was unstained. That gentleman insisted, and Mrs. Northcott went to seek Anderson.

During the last half hour Clement seemed to have changed his nature. He had entered that room a bright, merry-hearted boy; he would leave it a gloomy, sorrow-stricken man.

Not doubting that he was summoned to Mr. Northcott, Anderson would have gone straight to his couch; but Mr. Litton intercepted him.

Clement stood apart from the rest; his dejection contrasting strongly with Mr. Litton's air of bravado.

"Anderson," said the latter, "I want you to examine my arm."

"I have done so once this morning. To do so again will be unnecessary and injurious as well."

But Mr. Litton insisted.

"I want you to tell Mr. Northcott and Sir Edward Spearing whether it is possible

for me to hold a pen between my fingers."

"I can do that without undoing your bandages," said Anderson, as he took his patient's powerless fingers in his own. "The bone has not joined; your hand has no power whatever."

"That is enough," faltered Mr. Northcott, chafing at what seemed such unnecessary trifling.

"Very well," exclaimed Mr. Litton, "if you are satisfied, I guess I'll make myself scarce."

There was that in his manner, as he left the room, which jarred upon everybody but Mrs. Northcott.

"I merely make the suggestion," said Spearing—whilst Anderson drew closer to Mr. Northcott, whose evident weakness hindered him from leaving the room as he would have wished—"but is it possible the forgery was committed before Mr. Litton met with his accident?"

For one moment Clement's face brightened, to cloud again as soon as he heard Mrs. Northcott's ready answer.

"My brother broke his arm the day after his arrival," she said distinctly; "and on the day he came he was not out of my presence for a single hour."

"What have you to say for yourself?" demanded Mr. Northcott, as Sir Edward Spearing drew on his glove.

Clement abruptly turned to face them. Folding his arms and throwing back his head, he appeared to greater advantage now that his situation could no longer be affected by appearances, than he had throughout the interview.

"I have nothing to say; nothing more than I have said already. I have told you the truth. My uncle has lied, and you prefer to believe his lie. That is all."

"But," answered Spearing, not unkindly, "however desirous we may be to believe you, it is not possible to accept your statement. Had you told us at first all that you admit now, your case might have been stronger; but you prevaricated. You accuse Mr. Litton of shuffling, whereas it is you who have shuffled. You told us that you gave him the notes after luncheon, or, at least your words conveyed that meaning to me. As soon as you were confronted with Mr. Litton you altered your story to suit his contradiction. But after all, this is mere waste of words. It is proved beyond a doubt that he could not have forged your father's name; it

certainly rests between you and Mr. Litton. Who then but yourself could have done it?"

"I have told you I did not do it," Clement declared. "Mr. Litton has lied to you."

Spearing shrugged his shoulders expressively, and turned towards Mr. Northcott, who seemed to be rallying himself to speak. A hot-tempered man, he had hitherto placed a great control over himself; but now the time had come when he could remain silent no longer.

"It is you—you, Clement, who lie—you, who are not ashamed to accuse another of your own crime. Your whole life has prepared you for this. I know your motives; the debts of which you were afraid to tell me, but which you were too careless to hide from my wife. Go from my sight," he cried, pointing his trembling hand towards the door. "I pray to Heaven I may never see your face again as long as I live! It will not be long. You have dealt my death-blow."

His ashen face, his utter prostration as he sank backwards on the couch, gave greater force to his words.

Anderson was already at his side, motioning silently that Clement should leave the room, to avoid the possibility of further excitement.

Maud and Brownie had followed Anderson from the garden and were waiting outside Mr. Northcott's door, eager for intelligence as to his condition.

Until his last words had reached their ears, they had suspected nothing of the real state of affairs. But now Maud was possessed by ugly fears, whilst Brownie remembered the words which Clement had spoken on Friday under the apple-trees. He had told her that he feared some great trouble, if his father discovered his possession of those bank-notes. It seemed that his fear had been realised.

"Clement!" they cried together, as he came out, pale and haggard, from Mr. Northcott's room. "Clement!"

But he paid no heed, and, brushing past them with bowed head and hard-set face, left the house without a word.

OUR YEOMANRY CAVALRY.

IN a recent number of the "Nineteenth Century" there was an article by Viscount Melgund, taking exception to the present constitution and cost of the Yeomanry.

Whilst admitting generally the justice of these remarks, there are some points which are not quite in accordance with the facts of the case. The question that naturally arises is: "Can an effective cavalry force be made in the annual ten days' training as required by the War Office regulations?" This question must, I think, be answered in the negative.

In the case of the Volunteers, the shooting mania is carried to excess, whilst in the case of the Yeomanry, it is almost totally neglected. Shooting, however, does not mean efficiency; and, as an ex-officer of Volunteers, I venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that the shooting men of a regiment are not, as a rule, the most efficient at drill. It is true that the shooting man is always "efficient," as he takes care to attend the requisite number of drills, otherwise he would be debarred from prize shooting.

The Volunteers have far more opportunities of becoming good shots than the Yeomanry; the former being allowed ninety rounds of ammunition per man, whilst the latter get thirty rounds only. Then, again, the members of a Yeomanry troop are generally widely scattered over a district, and have few opportunities of meeting for practice. The fact, too, of being armed with an inferior weapon places them at a disadvantage, as it will not be contended that the Martini-Henry carbine can compete on equal terms with the Martini-Henry rifle either for range or accuracy.

An alteration has recently been made in the Yeomanry shooting regulations, by which the ranges for practice have been restricted to three hundred yards. At present, therefore, the firing takes place at one hundred, two hundred, and three hundred yards; the sight, being fixed at two hundred and fifty yards, rendering it necessary to aim at the lower part of the target at the first two ranges, and at the top of the target at the last range; but whether this will be an improvement on the old system remains to be seen.

The Yeomanry, as a body, is composed chiefly of farmers and men who ride their own horses, although, in the vicinity of large towns, men of a different class are enrolled. In the latter case it too frequently happens that the recruit is no rider. He may be able to sit on a military saddle; but he has neither "hands" nor "seat," and, unfortunately, these defects are not capable of being remedied in the short

time allowed for drill, especially as there is neither riding-school nor riding-master attached to the regiments. In the case, too, of a bad rider, there is no sympathy between horse and man, and this renders the horse less handy in the ranks, and is a constant cause of confusion. More care should be exercised in recruiting, and quality, not quantity, be aimed at; but at present the Permanent Sergeant-Major is anxious to keep the troop up to the maximum number, without regard to the suitability of the men.

The élite of a Yeomanry Troop is undoubtedly the farming class — men who ride good horses, who take a pride in being well mounted, and who know every road and bridle path in their respective districts. These are the men whose services would prove invaluable in case of invasion, and who are pre-eminently suited for reconnoitring and outpost duty, and yet this is a portion of the drill that is most neglected.

To be "efficient," that is, to earn the capitation grant, a trooper is required to attend six squad drills (dismounted), five troop drills (mounted), and eight days' permanent duty. The dismounted drills are generally held at some central spot, frequently at a market-town, on market days; whilst it has been found more convenient to hold the mounted drills two days previous to the commencement of the permanent duty. The time devoted to the troop-drills is generally occupied in simple movements, so as to accustom the horses to each other, and to afford instruction to the recruits. Of the eight days' permanent duty, two are frequently occupied in travelling to and from the place of assembly, and the remaining six days are devoted chiefly to drilling in squadrons and half-squadrons, sword exercise, and last, but not least, to marching past. In fact, the whole of the drill seems intended to ensure steadiness in the march past and inspection. Surely a thorough knowledge of outpost work, reconnoitring, skirmishing, and flag signalling, would more than counterbalance any deficiencies in steadiness in marching past the Inspecting Officer. It frequently occurs that a troop, during the whole of the training, is not once dismounted for skirmishing practice, neither is a single blank cartridge fired. It is also open to question if, on an average, one-third of the members of a troop know the meaning of the various trumpet calls.

No doubt the present system of drill is the correct one, if, in case of actual service, the Yeomanry is intended to act en masse with the regular cavalry; but if, on the other hand, it is intended to utilise the local knowledge of the men for ascertaining the capabilities of the country, and for supplying particulars of roads, bridges, etc., then the system of drill is radically wrong in its most essential points. The non-commissioned officers in many troops are appointed according to seniority alone, no regard being had to their fitness for the post, and no examination held to test their knowledge of drill, etc. This needs altering, and men selected for non-commissioned officers should at least know all the trumpet-calls, have sufficient knowledge of drawing to enable them to furnish a rough sketch of a portion of the country, showing its principal features, together with a brief description of its resources; and they should also be acquainted with flag signalling.

The hours of drill are too long for horses unaccustomed to the work, and are the cause of a good many cases of sickness. It does not seem to be borne in mind that horses, which in many cases are young and not in hard condition, are unable to bear the bucketing and knocking about that they get in the ranks for five or six hours daily, especially when it is considered that, owing to the weight of the military saddlery and accoutrements, they are carrying from two to three stone more than they would do in the hunting-field.

In the case of farmers the horses are almost without exception their own property; but borrowed horses are extensively used by men hailing from towns.

As a rule the horses are of the hunter, or roadster type, ranging from fifteen hands upwards; and in many cases valuable horses are brought up by their owners, partly from a feeling of pride in being well mounted, and partly with the object of getting a good purchaser.

As an instance of this I may mention that last year a horse in the troop to which I belong was sold for one hundred and thirty pounds; and I know of others for which big prices were refused. During the last two years Government officers have attended at the annual training for the purpose of purchasing horses for remounts for the regular cavalry; but, owing to various reasons, few transactions have taken place. The horses required must be above four and under six years old,

of a good stamp, undocked, and the price is limited to forty-two pounds.

It is the exception to find a farmer's horse undocked, whether intended for harness or the hunting-field, as in the former case a high-spirited horse is useless for harness purposes unless docked; and in the latter case it is a matter of custom; and although docking has been condemned as cruelty, still the practice obtains.

Sickness amongst the horses varies considerably with the weather. In some years there are numerous cases of colds and coughs, whilst in other years these cases are almost entirely absent. Sore backs occasionally occur; but chiefly with young horses. One source of sickness is due to the drill season commencing in May, and at that time many horses are casting their coats, and are, consequently, more susceptible to disease. Many horses, too, that are brought from warm stables at home where they receive every attention, and the best of provender, are, during the annual training, put into draughty stables, fed on indifferent food, and are in addition harder worked.

Accidents during drill occur but rarely; especially when we take into consideration the number of young horses that are annually used as chargers. Of course there is a certain amount of risk attendant on the drill; and an allowance, not exceeding thirty pounds, is made by Government, under certain circumstances, for each horse killed during the actual performance of duty. Slight injuries, caused by kicks, occasionally occur to both horses and men; but serious accidents are almost unknown.

It was at one time customary for ordinary hunting-saddles to be used by the Yeomanry; but it was found advisable to substitute the cumbersome horse-furniture at present in use.

This consists of the ordinary military saddle, with holsters and carbine bucket, crupper, breast-plate, picket-chain, head-stall, and curb and snaffle-bridle. The cloak, also, is folded and strapped to the front of the saddle, and a sheep-skin is used over the saddle when on escort or special duty. In addition to the saddlery already mentioned, the outfit of a trooper consists of a dress-jacket, stable-jacket, overalls, pants, busby, forage cap, two pair of spurs, sash, sword, pouch and belts, knee boots and white gloves; the whole of which—boots, gloves, and stirrup-leathers alone excepted—are supplied by the regiment.

It has been urged against the Yeomanry that their accoutrements, etc., are costly and unserviceable; and it has been estimated that the outfit of each recruit costs on an average twenty pounds. This estimate, however, must be considerably reduced, as twelve pounds would probably cover the entire cost; and, at all events, the clothing fund of our regiment has been able to meet all demands made upon it, without entailing any extra expense on the officers. The uniform is calculated to last from five to ten years, although in actual practice, this time is, perhaps, over-estimated.

A recruit on joining his troop does not receive a completely new outfit, although care is taken that the appointments issued to him are in good condition, with as many new articles as may be necessary. To secure the regiment against loss, a recruit, on receiving his equipment, is required to sign an agreement to partially repay the cost, provided he resigns within three years, the amount being fixed at five pounds the first year, three pounds the second, and one pound the third year. The cost of the band is defrayed by an annual subscription from the officers.

It is stated that the Yeomanry is a paid body of men; but if a closer examination is made, it will be found that the amount granted as pay has to be substantially increased by the trooper before it will cover his actual outlay. Pay is allowed at the rate of three shillings and sixpence per day for the two days devoted to troop-drills, provided two-thirds of the troop be present; and seven shillings and sixpence for each day of permanent duty. Out of this, however, the trooper has to provide accommodation for himself and horse, not to mention the considerable inroad made by, in many cases, a railway journey of from thirty to sixty miles.

It appears that greater facilities should be granted by the railway companies to members of the Yeomanry. Until recently, it was the practice of at least one Company to charge the ordinary fares for man and horse when travelling to attend the annual training, but, owing to the strong representation made to the Company, the horses are now conveyed at a single fare for the double journey, although the troopers are still charged the ordinary fare both ways. Were a still further reduction made, it would enable the members of a troop to assemble for an occasional mounted drill at some central point, during the interval between the annual assembly.

During the annual assembly the men are not billeted, but are allowed to make whatever arrangements may be most convenient. The consequence is, that the men are quartered at the various hotels in the town; and it is probable that this system does not tend to ensure soldier-like conduct, as after the drill for the day is over, the men are left entirely to their own resources; and, although in theory no man is supposed to appear in the streets in civilian attire, yet, in practice, this injunction is generally disregarded. Occasionally foot-parades take place in the afternoon; the drill is then confined to sword and carbine exercises.

With regard to the suggestion that troopers should provide their own uniform, it is evident in these days of agricultural depression, which affect most strongly the class of men who form the majority of the Yeomanry force, that any additional expense entailed on them would at once cause a considerable diminution in the numbers. Even now the expense incurred during the ten days' permanent drill is the chief cause why many regiments are short of men. No doubt greater efficiency would be secured were it definitely stated for what duties the Yeomanry regiments are intended in case of actual warfare, and the drill could then be adapted to meet those requirements.

The Yeomanry now form the nucleus of a most valuable branch of the auxiliary forces, and their knowledge of the general aspects of the country would be of the greatest service in case of invasion. Changes in the system of drill, or even in the arming of the force might probably be introduced with advantage; but to introduce radical changes with a view of altering the complete constitution of the Yeomanry Cavalry, would inevitably be followed by a diminution in the number of the members, accompanied at the same time by a reduction in the quality of the article.

SOME NATIONAL GAINS.

IN considering some of our national losses, in the way of types of character, a short time ago,* it probably occurred to some readers that, if many curious social products, which were once common, are

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, Third Series, No. 14, April 6, 1889.

now extinct, others, not perhaps less interesting for being exclusively the outcome of the nineteenth century, have taken their places.

Their number is much greater than that of our losses, for impatience of routine and the desire to get out of old grooves are the leading characteristics of this restless age. And it is noteworthy that it is more especially among women that this is the case. Those, nowadays, compelled by necessity to earn their own living, have launched out into all kinds of enterprises for themselves, abandoning the eternal rôle of governess, which, fifty years ago, was the only employment for gentlewomen. Indeed, so numerous are the resources of the fair sex at the present day, that two or three articles might be devoted to them alone.

We will begin the list with the Professional Chaperon, who is the exclusive product of this century. Imagine the horror of the great ladies of two or three generations back at the idea of making a living by taking up the daughters of rich snobs, presenting them at Court, chaperoning them for a season or two until they marry, and then recommencing the process with another heiress, *ad infinitum*!

Of course we do not assert that the thing was never done in the good old times, but at all events it was not then a matter of course for advertisements from matrons for girls to chaperon, and from girls anxious to find matrons to take them under their wing, to constantly appear in the papers. Each party now advertises for the other as coolly as Mrs. Jones for a cook or Mrs. Thompson for a governess; and there is no doubt each finds what she wants.

There are peeresses now in London society who make a handsome income by receiving rich girls into their houses; and, although it is perfectly well known, nobody thinks any the worse of them. But it is probable that when, in after years, Lady A. encounters her former protégée, Lady B., the great fishmonger's daughter, at Marlborough House, she may at times have a lurking recollection of having told that now-fashionable dame, in the early days of their acquaintance, not to eat peas with a knife; or that Lady B. may recall, as she entertains Lady A. at a magnificent dinner in her own house, the exceeding smallness and fewness of the mutton cutlets which formed the staple of that lady's menu when she resided under her roof before her marriage.

The Society Actress is already a very familiar figure, both in fiction and in real life. There is something to be said on both sides of the question; for, while the surroundings of the stage are full of temptation for some, on the other hand, no really good and modest woman need come to grief there more than anywhere else, if she chooses. It is largely a matter of individual temperament: a view of the case which is equally ignored by those who preach that all theatres are the invention of the Evil One, and those who gushingly represent stage-life as a smiling paradise, where all is joy and bliss.

There are many society actors among the ranks of professionals. More than one man of high social position has a son who has abandoned all other pursuits in order to go on the stage, and has never regretted his choice. Indeed, a popular player at a high-class theatre has much to sweeten his lot, and can afford to look down upon the briefless barrister or the struggling physician, even although he be not yet a gentleman by Act of Parliament.

Whatever be her ultimate fate, the Lady Shopkeeper is at present undoubtedly among our national gains; though whether she will ever crystallise into a permanent type, it is at present impossible to predict. Many ladies, whose incomes are reduced from failure of rent or other causes, not knowing what else to do, have opened shops—usually under assumed names—for the sale of dresses, millinery, old furniture, and bric-à-brac. Opinions vary regarding the wisdom of such a step; for, while a very large class of persons would give almost any price to a genuine member of the aristocracy for a bonnet or a Chippendale table, others again, of higher rank, shrink from making their little pet weaknesses known to a social equal, or endeavouring to bargain with a woman whom they will probably meet that same evening in the drawing-room of some mutual friend. Still, the attempt is praiseworthy. It is certainly more commendable to sell bonnets for a livelihood, than to sponge upon wealthy relatives, or fasten, as an additional incubus, upon the already overburdened pension-list of the country, as in the bad old days when no "lady of quality" ever thought of earning an income.

The Lady Nurse and the Lady Cook are also two new developments. A very large number of the medical profession—very wisely, we think—now choose their wives

from among the young ladies who abandon luxurious homes to undergo thorough training in some hospital; so that the career of a nurse may even be said to have a romantic side. The calling of the Lady Cook may appear less poetical; but there are many ladies, both here and in America, who make good incomes by superintending dinner-parties and ball-suppers, decorating the tables, and undertaking the more delicate culinary operations themselves.

The Professional Lawn-Tennis Player, male and female, is also another gain to society. We apologise most humbly for the designation, for we are well aware that (happily) there are no "professional" lawn-tennis players in this country. But the game has now become the serious occupation of so many young men and women of leisure, that it is difficult not to regard it as a distinct calling. The player of the highest grade is a sad and earnest person, whose whole life is spent in trying to get "fifteen better" than anybody else; and when he or she at length attains that exalted position, sleepless nights and laborious days are spent in the effort to maintain it. Those innocent persons who look upon lawn-tennis merely as a pleasant pastime, would be met by a smile of contemptuous pity from a crack player. Morning, noon, and night, all the year round, the stars do nothing but practise the game. In the summer they move about from one tournament to another, winning all the best prizes; and when autumn comes they fly to Cannes, Nice, or Algiers to pursue their favourite occupation. In the case of ladies such devotion is the more praiseworthy, because of the real sacrifices it entails. The lady-player, who really means business, has to let her appearance go. She must play, hail, rain, or shine—her face burnt in the sun, and freckled in the wind—while all feminine prettiness of apparel is sacrificed to the stout, serviceable garments, heelless shoes, and plain hats, which alone are suitable. A flutter of ribbons and laces about her, tight shoes, or a hat perched insecurely on her head, would "put her off her stroke" altogether. Of course there are some who contrive to combine play with prettiness; but they are in the minority.

We reminded our readers in our former paper that the haughty nobleman of the Sir Leicester Dedlock school is rapidly disappearing beneath the Juggernaut car of progress. We are sorry to be obliged to

add that his modern successor is not always an improvement upon the old type, for the Shady Nobleman just now is very much "en évidence," as is also the Shady Noblewoman. Whether it is that a cheap press has brought his failings more into prominence, or that great families no longer think it worth the trouble to hush up the scandals which would once have been sedulously concealed, certain it is that the Shady Nobleman continues to engage an ever-increasing share of public attention. In the divorce court, on the racecourse, in the lists of bankrupts, even in the chronicles of the police, his name is continually to be found. We need give no instances. They are, unfortunately, only too familiar to the minds of all.

And, alas! equally prominent in these levelling days is the Shady Peeress, very often the consort of the Shady Nobleman. She also appears with lamentable frequency in the papers, and really seems to enjoy it. Frequently sprung from the very gutter, she has, perhaps while engaged at some fast theatre or music-hall, succeeded in captivating some foolish young aristocrat, whose social descent, aided by such a wife, is only a question of time. She, too, appears at all the Courts, save that of Her Majesty. She is at once unknown, and yet too well-known in society, which chronicles her peccadilloes, while it strenuously refuses to receive her into its bosom.

It might be supposed that common-sense would induce women raised from the very dregs of society to be wives of men of high rank, to behave themselves, so as to retain the regard of their husbands. But too often they bring the manners and morals of the slums of Pimlico or St. John's Wood with them as their sole dowry; and the infatuated young noodle who has thrown himself away upon some painted, disreputable creature, lives to bitterly repent his folly in degrading himself by a *mésalliance*.

Both the Shady Nobleman and the Shady Noblewoman belong emphatically to the category of people who would not be missed—save by the newspaper-proprietors, who rely upon the scandals in high life to increase their circulation. These scandals have a most injurious effect upon the morals of the community at large; because, whilst right-minded people regard a sin, whether committed by the Duke of Blankshire, or John Jones, the

coastermonger, as equally heinous, the great mass of the ignorant population—and it must not be forgotten that Mrs. Brown at the wash-tub, and Tom the grocer's boy, are now as much interested in fashionable failings as their betters—think that because people in high stations offend against honour and morality, it is a kind of permission to them to go and do likewise.

To turn to a pleasanter topic, we are at once in Arcadia with the writer of "Reminiscences." He is a distinctly modern creation, for, though there have been many Reminiscents before, they were usually of the spiteful and ungracious order. Besides, their autobiographies came before the public chiefly in the form of letters published after their death—a kind of Parthian shot at their enemies from the grave. The modern writer is careful to publish his book in his lifetime, so that the profits may go to his or her own account, and not merely serve to enrich the heirs. And, whether male or female, the burden of all is the same—all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

There never was such a kind, indulgent public as the British public; there never were such courteous critics; there never existed such an admirable press! nobody ever had so many kind friends before! The Reminiscencer's own calling—painting, sculpture, novel-writing, or what not—is the most charming of all professions; and, in fact, everything is calculated to make the outsider turn green with envy.

The British public, which had stupidly believed that artists and literary people are no more exempt from the weaknesses of humanity than less gifted mortals, and that squabbling and jealousy are as rife on Parnassus as on Primrose Hill, has had to alter that opinion.

Blank, the sculptor, writes a book, in which he eulogises everything and everybody, but especially his dear friends, A, B, and C, who is each, in his own line, the cleverest and best of good fellows. In their turn, A, B and C also write their "Reminiscences," in which they refer in terms of the highest praise to their dear friend, Blank, the sculptor, of whose genius they cannot say enough, and to their other esteemed comrades D, E, and F, who, in their turn, are equally complimentary to Messrs. G, H, and I; and so the ball is kept rolling.

To give the thing a greater air of "vraisemblance," some few are candid enough to touch lightly on their early struggles,

when a dinner or a pair of boots was a consideration. But all wind up with some grand, congratulatory dinner or presentation, with the inevitable personal assurance from the Prince of Wales, that that particular Reminiscencer is, and always has been, His Royal Highness's most admired actor, artist, or novelist, as the case may be.

It would be a difficult matter to decide whether the modern doctor or the modern patient has the more completely broken away from the shackles of conventionality. Fifty years ago, calling in the doctor was a serious affair, producing such results in the way of huge boluses and dozens of bottles of the most nauseous medicine, to say nothing of cupping, leeching, and blistering, that only persons of the very strongest constitution could venture to summon medical aid.

It was an age of blind faith, when the solemn fiat of a physician was sufficient to launch any absurdity: such as tar water, or piercing the ears for the purpose of improving the sight. But the modern patient has become sceptical and rebellious, not to say self-opinionated and domineering. He believes his doctor to be no more infallible than any other man, and tells him candidly that he does not believe in ruining his system with a lot of drugs, to which the disciple of Galen replies:

"Quite right, my dear sir. It's a great mistake, and we never prescribe much now."

The patient is also allowed his choice of diet, with a freedom unheard of in the days of toast-and-water and barley-broth.

"Eat what you fancy, my dear sir," enjoins the accommodating physician. "You can judge what suits you better than I can," and he winks at the consumption of various delicacies, the mention of any one of which as suitable for a sick man would have sent the old-time doctor into a fit. This new-born arrogance of patients, and subservience of physicians, causes the enquiring mind to wonder whether, in a generation or two, men will not refuse to call in doctors at all.

And last, and most beautiful production of all, we have got the Cheap Tripper. It may safely be affirmed that preceding ages knew him not. The Cheap Tripper is essentially the creation of the Age of Steam, before which era travelling for pleasure was a luxury confined to the wealthy classes alone. Now there is not a

man or woman, however poor, who does not endeavour to have at least one day during the year in the country, or at the seaside, to show that they can afford to take their ease as well as those above them. If the Cheap Tripper is not precisely a thing of beauty, he is certainly a joy for ever; for now that we have got him, he will stay with us to the end of time.

He is a gregarious animal; for it appears to be a point of honour with him not to travel without "missus and the little 'uns." If single, he takes his young woman with him by the excursion train, supplies her liberally with the cheap and generally unwholesome refreshments in which his soul delights, and gallantly presents her with a mug or a shell-box with "A present from Margate" or "Southend" on it, as a souvenir of an 'appy day. If he and 'Arriet have been violently ill during the sixpenny sail which is "de rigneur," they console themselves by having their likenesses taken by an itinerant photographer, or a donkey-ride; and they will sing Moody and Sankey hymns, or the latest music-hall ditty, with undiminished ardour all the way home, with spirits quite unimpaired by the unholy lateness of the hour at which excursion trains usually return to their starting-point. To set off about five a.m., to journey incessantly for five or six hours, to rush about all day eating unripe fruit and shell-fish, and return home in the wee sma' hours—who would dare to say that the Cheap Tripper's idea of a day's pleasure is not absolutely Spartan in its heroism?

HER INHERITANCE.

A STRANGE STORY. IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

IN a little room in a dreary London house, a woman lay asleep on a sofa, and a man sat near her with an open letter in his hand. It was a lodging-house sitting-room, evidently—there is something about a "furnished apartment" which is not to be effaced or disguised without much care and skill, and this room bore token of neither one nor the other. It was a November afternoon, and the rain had been falling all day with that dull, dreary, depressing persistence which is characteristic of November rain in London; and though it was only four o'clock, the room was lighted rather by the flickering fire

than by the light from without, which only seemed to intensify the dreariness within, as it brooded over those corners in which it still ruled, seeming to keep its brighter rival at bay.

The shabby specimen of the hard, slippery, horsehair class of sofa on which the woman lay, was drawn up close to the fire, and the dancing flames threw their uncertain light full on her face. It was so white, that even the red glow failed to give it colour; and as she lay sleeping there, her only expression one of pain and distress, it was impossible to tell whether, in health and animation, she might or might not have been pretty. It was a young face—not more than nineteen, apparently, framed in pale yellow hair, which fell somewhat untidily about it, and it was worn with pain and illness; the mouth was very sensitive and expressive, but lacking in strength, as was the delicate chin. The fading daylight grew fainter and fainter, the firelight triumphed and reigned in every corner, and still she lay asleep; and still the man sat motionless by her side. As he watched her, he saw her face lose the strained look of pain, and a happy smile curve her white lips. What was she dreaming of? Ah, he knew well enough that her dreams were always the same—he could almost conjure up before his own eyes, as he sat there in the desolate room, the scenes in which she was roaming so happily in dreamland. Had she not told him of them again and again? Were not those dreams the happiness of her life?

She is standing at a casement window, in the early morning light. She has just jumped up from the little wooden bedstead standing in a corner of the room behind her, and opened the window, that the sweet, pure air may fill the little room, as she turns to the oak bureau and dresses herself. On the wide window-ledge are pots of sweet-smelling plants—scented geranium, "lemon" plant, and musk, and round the window climbs a rose, whose buds peep in on her as she throws back the casement. As she stands there, looking out, she sees directly underneath a quaint farmhouse garden, its trim, close-cut grass, its roses—red, white, and pink—its old-fashioned sweet-williams, stocks, and sweet-peas, all fresh, and dripping with the morning dew. Farther away, dim and indistinct in the mist, which the sun has not yet had time to disperse, she sees green corn, and fields,

where haymaking is already going on, and as the scent of the hay, and the song of a rising lark come to her through the cool, sweet, morning air, she hears her mother's voice cry, "Dorothy, Dorothy!"

This is the low, oak-beamed room where she learnt her lessons, and sat at her mother's feet to learn the mysteries of plain needlework. There is her little stool and her book; the leg of the table still bears the marks made long ago by little kicking feet. How often she has watched the pictures in the fire, sitting there in the old oak settle. Into the wide, low entrance hall now! There is the large oak chest in which she used to hide; and up and down those shallow stairs she has passed day by day for eighteen years. Ah, here, at their head, is her own little room. Here, and under the willow down by the brook which flows through the farm, she has looked all her joys and sorrows in the face since first she had any sense of joy or sorrow. The position of the furniture, the pattern of the paper here, the sound of the rustling willow leaves, the look of the clear blue sky as it shines through, these are woven into her very life, for they have associated themselves with her deepest mental experiences. It was in this little room that she shed the first bitter tears of her life—tears for her dead mother. It was under the willow two years later that she heard the words: "Dorothy, I love you. Will you be my wife?"

It was in this little room again—

The figure on the sofa stirred and moaned a little, and the man bent forward and watched it anxiously as the distressed expression returned to the pale face.

"Never to come back again! Never to see my home any more! Oh, my home! my home! Oh!"

The moan became a cry; the thin features were convulsed with pain; and the man knelt down by the sofa and said, softly:

"Dorothy, Dorothy!"

She woke with a start, and opening her large, blue eyes, which shone with a wild, hungry light, she stretched out her thin hands towards him and cried:

"Philip, Philip, has it come? Has he answered? Will he let me go home?"

The man made no answer. He gathered the trembling hands into his own, and kissed them tenderly.

"Philip, there is a letter! Oh, tell me! I may go home, Philip?"

"My darling, try to be quiet—try to be brave. There is a letter, but——"

"He says—no!"

"He says—no."

He was gazing into her eyes as he spoke with heart-sick anxiety as to the effect of his words. A little shock seemed to pass across her face, leaving it grey and drawn; and she fell back panting a little, her eyes still fixed on him, but with their light gone.

"Dorothy! Oh, my poor love!"

"Read me the letter."

"No, no. Dorothy——"

"Read me the letter."

He obeyed; and by the uncertain light of the fire read:

"SIR,—You ask my permission to bring your wife to my house, on the plea that she has suffered severely from home-sickness, and that, in her present state of health, her life is endangered thereby. Failing my consent to this, you ask me to 'satisfy her sick fancy,' by a promise that her child—should it survive—shall be allowed 'to learn to know and love its mother's home.' In acceding to either of these requests I should break the word which I passed to my step-daughter when she became your wife—that neither she nor hers should ever cross my threshold again.—I am, etc., JAMES FARMER."

As he finished reading, the man crushed the letter in his hand with a gesture of utter loathing and contempt, and, turning again to the woman beside him, he took her into his arms.

"Dorothy, my love, be brave. Don't look like that! Why did I ever come into your life? What can I do for you? Dorothy, Dorothy! Is my love nothing to you?"

She looked up at him with a strange, yearning expression in her blue eyes—the look of an animal that cannot understand or explain its feelings, and only knows that it suffers.

"Oh, Philip, yes!" she said. "You know, you know! Only my home! Oh, if I were strong it would be different; but lying here thinking, thinking all day long, I cannot keep my mind from my past life: my childhood, my mother, and my home. When I sleep, I go back there always in my dreams; and when I wake—oh, Philip, I cannot understand myself. I cannot put it into words. I love you, dear, indeed, indeed I do; but I long, I long—I am dying for my old home."

Her weak voice rang with a despairing,

yearning cry ; and the man who loved her and who was impotent to satisfy the sick craving which he had seen for months eating away her life, knelt by her side in the now dying firelight, and with his lips pressed to her thin, white hands while she went on :

"And then I thought that if I could know that my child would know the place I love so much, that I could leave my love of it to my child, I could bear it. I could bear to die here — away from it. But now—oh, Philip, Philip, Philip!"

It was her last appeal. A few hours later, as her baby opened its eyes on the world, Dorothy's short life, her joys and her troubles, came to an end. Her aching, longing pain was soothed by the kindly hand of death ; and her husband and her little daughter were alone together.

CHAPTER II.

"HUBERT, are you coming ? Hubert, it is really getting late ! Hubert!"

The speaker was standing with her back against a five-barred gate, in an attitude half resigned, half impatient.

"What a pretty little woman !" was what people said at first sight of Mrs. Hubert Ferrars, though she was only three-and-twenty. A certain atmosphere of completeness pervaded her, mentally and physically, which it was impossible to associate with girlishness. Whether it lay in her self-possessed manner, in the self-reliant glance of the quick, observant, blue eyes ; or whether, as some people asserted, she owed it to the beautiful way in which her fair hair was dressed—always in the very latest fashion—on the top of her little head, or to the perfect fashionable simplicity of her always-appropriate dress, no one could decide ; but the fact remained that she had been a "pretty little woman," almost as soon as she ceased to be a "pretty little child."

Receiving no answer to her call, she turned and looked over the field, across which she had sauntered ten minutes before, at a man who was sitting before an easel at the top of the green slope, which swept up from where she stood, evidently too deeply absorbed in his work to be reached by a voice from which he was separated—even in a material sense—by the width of a whole field.

Mrs. Ferrars and her husband had come to the neighbouring village on the previous evening, that the latter might make studies

for a picture, and it was her first experience of English country. Though her parents had been English, she had lived all her life in St. Petersburg ; and there Hubert Ferrars, on a holiday journey, had met her, loved her—their friends said from force of contrast—and married her. But they had been sitting out of doors all day long, and, though she had been impressed by the scenery at first—strangely impressed her husband had thought—Mrs. Ferrars felt that ten hours of it was almost enough.

"Oh, dear old goose," she murmured to herself, "he is buried again, and I really thought he meant to come this time. Must I go back ? I'll try another call first."

She made a speaking trumpet of both hands this time, and with a little laugh in her voice, called, "Coo-ee ! coo-ee !"

This time her voice reached him, and he looked up with a start.

"How—much—longer ?" the laughing voice demanded.

She kept her eyes fixed on him as he put his things together, lest he should relapse again, and then, as he joined her, she said :

"Well, thank goodness ! Do you know how often you have said 'I'll come,' and have not come, in the course of the last hour ? No, don't apologise, sir ! Be thankful that you have a wife who knows the value of your eyesight."

He was a tall, quiet-looking man, with dark hair, and very dark-brown eyes, in which there was usually an absent, far-away expression. They were not absent now, however, as he looked down at the little woman at his side ; they were full of love and contentment, and their expression was reflected in the blue ones that met them. When their mutual friends had exclaimed at what was apparently such an ill-assorted match, Hubert Ferrars had declared that he was the only person in the world who really appreciated his wife, popular as she was ; and Mrs. Ferrars had asserted that nobody ever could, would, or should understand her dreamy, reserved, unpractical husband as she did. It was two years since these theories were first formulated, and they held to them more firmly than ever.

She took his camp-stool from him now, slipped her other hand through his arm, and they walked slowly through the fields towards the little cottage where they were staying. On reaching it, they paused a moment, and looked down the little village

street. The sun was setting, and the seven elms that stood in a row a little further down the street, separating the school-house from the little village shop, cast long shadows over the winding road and the primitive apology for a pavement. The low, thatched cottages on the opposite side were bathed in a crimson glow, except where the trees threw their shadows, and the little diamond window-panes flashed and sparkled in the light.

"How pretty and quaint!" said Mrs. Ferrars. "I never saw anything at all like it. Ah!" breaking off suddenly, "look, Hubert, there is that woman again. Let us see if she will look at me this time."

The woman in question had just come out of the dark little shop, and was standing, dazzled for a moment by the bright reflection from the windows opposite, shading her eyes with her hand. She was an ordinary-looking woman enough, with one of those rather stern, strong, wrinkled faces to be seen by the dozen in any country village. She crossed the road, out of the way of the dazzling light, and as she did so she suddenly became aware of Hubert Ferrars and his wife. A sort of spasm passed across her face, and she came slowly up the street, fixing her eyes on Mrs. Ferrars with a look which it was hard to define—half recognition, half question, all perplexity, and—yes, there could be no doubt about it—fear. She never moved her eyes as she went by, and as she passed they turned with a simultaneous movement, and looked after her, until they saw her at a little distance stop, and look back again, and then, with a sudden gesture, wipe her brow and neck with her coarse apron.

They looked at one another in amazement.

"What can she mean, Hubert? She looked like that when we passed her yesterday evening, and again this morning, when she was standing at a cottage door as I went by. Let us ask Mrs. Haynes if she can tell us anything about her."

Mrs. Haynes, their landlady, was, after the manner of her kind, loquacious, but not enlightening. The woman was Mrs. Green, she told them, a widow woman fairly well to do. She was a bit proud like; kept herself to herself; but, deary no, she was not mad—nobody less so. She had a brother, who was not to be called just right in his head since he lived by himself in the haunted farm; but she were all there right enough, she—

But here her flow of information was interrupted. Hubert Ferrars was a connoisseur of haunted houses. In the ideas connected with them, and often in their material aspect, he found a form of the picturesque in which he delighted, and he took up the word at once.

"The haunted farm," he said. "Where is that; and what haunts it?"

"As to what haunts it, sir, that I can't say; not believing in such stories, nor wishing to hear them. It lies about two miles out in a very lonely part; and a pretty place it must have been before it went to rack and ruin through no one living there, because of—whatever it is as is seen there. The land was sold, of course, all but the garden and a bit of wood at the back, which no one didn't want; and there old Sam lives a-minding of it, he says, though who for no one couldn't say. They do say as him and his sister—that's Mrs. Green, sir—was servants there years back; but I'm never in those parts, so to speak, and can't tell for certain."

"Is the place in ruins? Can one get in?"

"Lor no, sir; not to say in ruins. It's whole enough; only deserted like. But it's Mrs. Green as could tell you all about it, sir, only she don't always care to be questioned. They do say as she have seen—what there is to be seen—times and again; and as for getting in, you could mention it to her, and maybe she'd see Sam about it. He's a bit crusty, sir, old Sam is."

Mrs. Ferrars had turned away. Haunted houses had no attraction for her; she was "too practical," she said. But she was very curious about the woman who had looked so strangely at her, and she now said:

"Let us do that, Hubert. You would like to see the house, and I should like to see Mrs. Green. Shall we go now. It is not too late, is it, Mrs. Haynes?"

So Mr. Ferrars took up his hat again, and they walked down the street, pursued by Mrs. Haynes's voluble directions, to the little cottage which she pointed out.

The knock was answered immediately by the woman who had passed up the street a little while before; and as her eyes fell on Mrs. Ferrars's face, the same expression sprang into them again. She turned them away, however, at once, and kept them fixed on the ground by an obvious effort, while Hubert Ferrars, coming straight to the point, said, pleasantly:

"Good evening. Mrs. Green, I believe? Mrs. Haynes, our landlady, has been telling us about a haunted house in this neighbourhood; and, as I was anxious to hear more of it, and if possible to see it, she referred me to you. I shall be so much obliged if you can help me in the matter."

She looked up as he finished, hesitated a moment; then, with another furtive glance at Mrs. Ferrars, she said: "Will you please to walk in, sir?" They followed her into the little room, Hubert Ferrars apologising for troubling her in his gentle, courteous way, and she said: "Would you be pleased to tell me why you want to hear about 'The Glen,' sir?" Her manner was quite respectful, but guarded and very reserved; and he answered, with a smile:

"Well, I have no special reason; but I have always a weakness for such places, and the stories attached to them, and I should be very glad to hear anything you can tell me. What is it that is seen at—'The Glen,' is it called? I am told that you can tell me from personal experience."

The woman's brown face changed colour slightly, and she stole another glance at Mrs. Ferrars before she said:

"Yes, sir; I have seen it often and often."

She spoke very quietly, and Ferrars, who had never before found himself face to face with any one who laid claim to having seen "something" with his or her own eyes, was startled.

"I beg your pardon," he said instinctively, "perhaps you would rather not tell me any more."

There was a moment's pause, and then the woman said abruptly, without looking up:

"You wanted to see the place, sir? Would you like to spend a night there? Would you like to see—it!"

With a slight exclamation of astonishment he rose and stood with his hand resting on the back of his wife's chair, and Mrs. Green went on:

"If you would like it, sir, will you go to-morrow night? My brother will be there then, and, maybe, not again for some time, and it would be lonesome for you by yourself. Will you do it, sir?"

Such a chance had seldom presented itself to Hubert Ferrars, and, recovering from his first surprise and from a certain thrill of awe that the woman's words had sent through him, he said:

"I will, indeed; and thank you. Will you arrange with your brother?"

"Yes, sir," she said, "I'll manage." She hesitated a moment, and then added: "The—the lady, sir—she won't go with you?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Ferrars, speaking promptly for herself. "I shall be comfortably asleep in bed. I am an unbeliever, and should see nothing."

The woman lifted her eyes, and cast at her another of those peculiar looks.

"No, ma'am," she said in a low voice, as her eyes fell again. "No; you would never see the ghost that haunts 'The Glen.'"

It seemed to Hubert Ferrars that there was something strange in the pause that followed, and he was just going to wish Mrs. Green good evening when she said, slowly:

"I—I have a picture of the place. You would, maybe, like to see it;" and, turning to a cupboard in the corner, she took from it a small water-colour sketch. She stood for a moment with it in her hand, and then, moving quickly across the room, she laid it on the table before Mrs. Ferrars, on whom she once more fixed her eyes, this time with a look of excited expectation. Hubert Ferrars was still standing by his wife's chair; his hand was on her shoulder; and, as her eyes fell on the little picture, he felt her start violently. Before he could speak, Mrs. Green said, in a tone which she was evidently controlling by a great effort, addressing herself to him, but without moving her eyes from his wife's face: "You see, sir, there is the principal door. You go in there into——"

"Into a low, wide hall, in which stands an old oak chest. There is a door on the right leading into a low oak-beamed room. The stairs are very shallow, and of polished oak, and at their head is a little room, with a casement window from which one sees a view like that first bit we saw this morning."

Mrs. Ferrars had said all this in a low, absorbed voice, as if unconscious that she was speaking aloud, and her husband had listened with a surprised smile. The faded picture—the picture of an exterior merely—showed nothing of this to him. But suddenly the subtle shock which a human being, who is feeling intensely, will communicate to others near it, passed from the woman, whose face was white and quivering with excitement, and laid its hold on the husband and wife. They looked up suddenly, and there was a silence which seemed to palpitate with

something intangible and indefinable Ferrars, though his finer organisation had felt it more keenly than his wife had done, was the first to recover himself, and break up the curious strain of the situation.

"Why, Thea," he said, "how can you tell? When have you been there? I thought——"

But she started again, and stopped him quickly.

"Yes, dear," she answered, "I know. Shall we say good evening to Mrs. Green now? We are taking up her time."

She was very pale, and there was something about her manner—an unusual excitement in the quick, rather uneven way in which she spoke that caused him to obey her almost involuntarily, and kept him silent, until they were again in their own little sitting-room.

Then he said :

"Now, Thea! What is it, dear? What does it mean?"

She had quite recovered herself, and laughed a little as she said :

"Nothing at all tragic, I assure you, dear. You have not stumbled across a hollow mystery in my past life, nor have you unearthed the skeleton of my private cupboard. It is only a rather curious coincidence. I know that house quite well, though of course I've never been there. All my life, ever since I can remember, I have dreamt of it."

"You have dreamt of it?"

"Yes, not every night, of course; but sometimes for nights together. Generally about this time of year, and always on my birthday. Oh, don't look so astonished, dear. I am so used to it, that it has ceased to seem strange to me; and though I was a little startled when I saw that picture, it is one of those odd things that can't be explained, and it is of no use to think about it. Do you really mean to go there to-morrow night?"

"Yes," he answered; "yes, I do."

SOCIETY IN ITALY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

WHEN I first visited Florence, in 1837, Tuscany was still under the rule of the Grand Duke Leopold, an amiable, easy-going Prince, who troubled himself about State affairs just as much as it was absolutely incumbent on him to do, and not an iota more. As far as was practicable, he led a very retired life, which rather

detracted from his popularity; but once or twice in the course of the winter, the leading nobles and strangers were invited to a grand ball at the Pitti Palace, and entertained in a truly regal fashion.

In those pre-railway days, when the means of locomotion were limited to post, "vetturino," or the lumbering diligence, the number of tourists was, naturally, inconsiderable; and visitors to "la bella Firenze" generally took up their quarters there for several months, suites of apartments in most of the old palaces being procurable at a very moderate cost. Besides these temporary sojourners, the foreign contingent included several permanent residents of distinction; such as the Countess Lipona, the widow of the "beau sabreur," Joachim Murat, who kept open house during the Carnival, and the ex-King of Westphalia, Jérôme Bonaparte. The latter, socially known as the Prince de Montfort, held weekly receptions in the spacious palace occupied by him; he had a strong prejudice against our countrymen, only two English families, bearers of letters of introduction from his brothers in London, being exceptionally favoured with invitations. It must be owned that these "soirées" were by no means exhilarating, the strictest attention to etiquette being rigorously maintained; and it was a relief, after a brief interchange of ceremonious civilities in the state apartment, to adjourn to the billiard-room, where the Marquis Torregiani, the best player in Florence, was wont to exhibit his skill to an admiring circle. Jérôme's daughter, the Princess Mathilde, then in her eighteenth year, was strikingly handsome; but the palm of loveliness was unanimously accorded to the Misses Greville—two of the most attractive specimens of English beauty I ever remember seeing.

The only Florentine noble whose one ball was annually looked forward to as the most important event of the season, was Prince Corsini—the others usually contenting themselves with receiving their friends, three times a week, in their opera box at the Pergola; many young members of ancient families, however, were constantly to be met with in general, and more especially English society. One of the most assiduous frequenters of the fashionable club, the Casino dei Nobili, was old Valabregue, the husband of the renowned Catalani; he was then a hale and active little man, who knew everybody, and whose memory was an inexhaustible trea-

sury of reminiscence and anecdote, which rendered him a most entertaining companion. His wife, whose expressive countenance still retained some faint traces of her former beauty, was rarely seen in public; but her house was always open to a small circle of friends, at whose solicitation she would occasionally seat herself at the piano, and with a voice trembling from age, but still inexpressibly touching, sing a few bars of some favourite air, invariably concluding with a verse of "God Save the Queen."

English society in Florence was, at that period, limited to some dozen families, about half of whom were permanently settled there. None of these, with the exception of a hospitable couple named Fombelle—who occupied a charming set of apartments on the Lungo l'Arno—received regularly; there was, however, no lack of impromptu dinners and carpet-dances, with now and then, by way of variety, a musical soirée, the lion of which, when he could be induced to play, was the veteran pianist, John Baptist Cramer. In all these social gatherings, of whatever nature they might be, it was an understood thing that, at a certain hour of the evening, Mr. French, junior partner of the banking firm of Plowden and French, would be asked by the hostess to sing "Love's Young Dream," which he did, very sweetly. To newcomers this "intermezzo" appeared delightful, but it became monotonous in the long run; and it was uncharitably suggested that the vocalist's repertory must be confined to this solitary specimen, for he never sang anything else. Some years later, French, in conjunction with a philanthropic colleague, having defrayed the entire cost of a much-required new road from Florence to Fiesole, he received from the Tuscan Government the title of Count—that of Baron being at the same time conferred on his coadjutor. The four last lines of a squib written in commemoration of this double promotion may not inappropriately be inserted here:

So strangers may, whenever they
The new road gaze from far on,
Say, "Half this mount has made a Count,
The other half a Baron."

The Florentine theatres were then four in number, namely, the Pergola, where operas only were performed; the Alfieri, as its name imports, devoted to classic tragedy and drama; the Cocomero, where I had an opportunity of seeing Luigi Vestri, the best Italian comedian, in a version

of "Pauvre Jacques," a part originally created by Bouffé, and rendered familiar to English playgoers by Morris Barnett; and the Borgo Ognissanti, a popular place of entertainment, where Stenterello, a mild species of Pasquin, reigned supreme, and, in a "patois" incomprehensible to any one but a born Florentine, satirised with impunity the political events of the day. Lovers of good music, who were fortunate enough to obtain an invitation to the Casa Standish, the residence of the Poniatowski family, had a rare treat in store for them; namely, the privilege of hearing the "Elisir d'Amore" and the "Barbiere" admirably sung by the Princess Elise and her two brothers, Joseph and Charles, the former of whom, a well-known operatic composer, subsequently became a member of the French Senate under Napoleon the Third.

I must not forget to mention that the only operas produced at the Pergola during my stay were "Beatrice di Tenda" and "Lucrezia Borgia"—then a novelty; in the first of these, the heroine was personated by the popular Virginia Blasis, whose death, after a few days' illness, in the spring of 1838, cast a gloom over the city; and in the second, Moriani and Caroline Ungher—the most perfect Lucrezia I have ever heard—drew crowded houses until the close of the season.

Naples in 1839 was, what it still is, one of the most charmingly situated and dirtiest cities in Europe; and, as a writer of that day unflatteringly but truly remarked, "would have been a Paradise, were it not for the Neapolitans." The latter—I speak of the lower classes—were a lazy, thievishly-inclined race, who lived literally from hand to mouth, and never did a stroke of work when they could possibly help it. They were, moreover, marvellously adroit in the science of pocket-picking; and if an incautious stranger ventured to indulge in a stroll through the populous quarters of the city, it was a thousand to one that, on his return home, he would discover that he had been ingeniously relieved of his handkerchief, and whatever other "portable property" he might have had about him. The want of sufficient drainage, too, was a standing nuisance; and the neighbourhood of Santa Lucia was rarely, if ever, entirely free from fever. The more open parts of the town, however, such as the Chiaja and the Chiatamone, were com-

paratively salubrious; and the palaces overlooking the Villa Reale afforded ample accommodation for that class of visitors, by whom a few hundred ducats more or less disbursed for house rent, were regarded as a secondary consideration.

The season of 1839 was an exceptionally gay one; Court balls—Naples had a Court in those days—and gala nights at the San Carlo followed each other in rapid succession, alternating with a series of brilliant entertainments given by the Marchesa di Salsa, better known as Lady Strachan, assisted by her pretty daughter, the Principessa San Antimo, in her magnificent palace on the Chiaja. Nor had playgoers any cause to complain; besides the San Carlo, where Donizetti personally superintended the revival of one or two of his best operas, they might choose between the Teatro del Fondo, where a company of French actors drew good houses, and the little San Carlino, the favourite resort of all who relished genuine Neapolitan humour.

Prosper Mérimée, already celebrated as the author of the "*Chronique de Charles IX.*," paid a flying visit to Naples during the winter, and proved a valuable acquisition to the cosmopolitan society assembled there. In every projected excursion, whether to Pozzuoli and Baia, or to Sorrento and Castel-a mare, he was always to the fore; and as in those benighted days "*Murray*" and "*Bædeker*" were not, and tourists had to depend for information on the classical Forsyth and the unreliable Mrs. Starke, the services of so obliging and accomplished a cicerone, who seemed to know everything instinctively, were constantly in requisition. Of our own compatriots temporarily located in the Neapolitan capital, two deserve a word of mention; namely, the splendidly handsome Mrs. Mountjoy Martin, who bore away the palm of beauty from all her rivals, native and foreign; and the witty General Sir William Keir Grant, one of the most amusing "*raconteurs*" of his day. He had lost an arm in a duel, and was once greatly embarrassed on being asked by a Royal personage in what engagement he had met with so regrettable a misfortune. No one, however, ventured to enquire what had been his answer; for he was not a man to be trifled with, and would probably, like Mr. Pyke, have had his questioner "*out before dinner-time.*"

On Boxing Day, 1839, in almost May weather, a cricket match organised by

some adventurous ex-Etonians took place on the Campo Marzio above the city, the sides being Eton against "*the World.*" The school team, for want of better players, was partly made up of incapables—of whom I was one—who had never achieved much glory in the "*playing-fields*" at home; but in spite of this drawback, and thanks to the presence of Wilkinson, the chronicler of "*Eton in Keate's Time,*" and Yonge, two tremendous athletes, formerly members of our eleven, we secured an easy victory in one innings, with over a hundred runs to spare.

Shortly before my arrival at Naples, an event occurred which created a considerable sensation in military circles: namely, the assassination of a young lieutenant—of a noble Calabrian family—by Antonio Baretti, a private in the same regiment. The fact of the murder having been committed in open day, and in one of the most frequented cafés of the city, contributed not a little to increase the public excitement, more especially as its perpetrator, beyond an expression of satisfaction on learning that his victim had expired, persisted in maintaining a stubborn silence as to the motive of the deed. On the night preceding his trial, however, he delivered a sealed packet to his confessor, stipulating that its contents should not be divulged until six months after his execution; which, he being convicted on the clearest evidence, and offering no defence, took place almost immediately, behind the barracks of his regiment. On the expiration of the prescribed interval, the packet was opened, and a manuscript discovered, evidently written under the influence of delirium, and containing a narrative which, if true, as there was little reason to doubt, tended in the eyes of many to palliate, if not altogether excuse, what had hitherto been regarded as a totally unprovoked and indefensible crime.

It appeared that the soldier, previous to his enlistment, had been betrothed to a young girl of great personal attractions, who, during the absence of her lover on a journey to Rome and Venice, had listened to the persuasions of the lieutenant, whose acquaintance she had casually made, and finally eloped with him from her father's house. Deserted by him a few weeks after, she returned home, and died of a broken heart; while her betrayer, who had rejoined his regiment in the capital, was engaged in paying his addresses to a wealthy Sicilian heiress, whose hand and

fortune, according to common report, he had every chance of obtaining. Meanwhile Antonio, who in his wanderings from place to place had heard nothing of what had occurred, arrived at his native village; and there, for the first time, learnt the sad tidings that awaited him. From that moment he had but one object in life—revenge; and determined that it should be complete. Taking a sorrowful leave of the childless father, he at once repaired to Naples; and a fortnight later was enrolled as a recruit in the regiment to which his enemy belonged, bidding his time until an opportunity should present itself of carrying his project into execution. Little by little he contrived to render himself useful to the man he loathed, and was occasionally employed as the bearer of letters and messages to the latter's intended bride, to whom, when he judged that the fitting moment had arrived, he confided the story of her lover's infamy, and so entirely convinced her of the truth of the accusation, that on her suitor's next visit he was curtly dismissed, and forbidden to show his face before her again. Furious at this unexpected reception, and totally unaware of the cause, the lieutenant betook himself to a private room in a café of the Strada Toledo, brooding over his rejection, and striving in vain to penetrate its motive. There Antonio found him. What passed between them, although not described by the narrator, may be easily imagined, the manuscript concluding with the following words:

"My mission is accomplished; I have avenged the wrongs of the only woman I ever loved, and die gladly, for what would life be to me without her!"

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

BY MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV.

DUMPHIE stands, still silent, by the mantel, leaning his arm upon it to steady himself. He is struck to the heart by the change in the man before him. In the blaze of the morning sunshine the work done by a night of vigil and pain shows cruelly. It almost seems as though the temples, just where the hair has grown to be a little worn and grey, are more hollow than when Dumphie last saw them; and the clear, bright eyes

have taken a misty look most pitiful to meet and see.

"How is it you are here?" says Louis Draycott at last. Then, with a long, heavy sigh, he adds:

"Do you know?"

"Yes, I know."

"Who told you?"

"Bessy came last night. I should have come to you at once, but I could not get in. I have been waiting outside the gate this hour."

Dumphie gives one quick look at the white face that lies back against the chair, and steps towards the bell.

"Forgive me for taking the law into my own hands in another man's room," he says, as he rings a sharp peal; "but the first thing to be done is for you to have some strong coffee and some food. You are worn out."

"Something rather like it, I fancy," returns the other, closing his eyes a moment, and passing his hand across his forehead.

No woman could have been more tender over him than Dumphie. He stands over him, constraining him to eat and drink; watches to see some faint tinge of colour steal into the pale lips and cheek, some light into the sunken eyes.

All this time there is silence, or something nearly approaching to it, between the two men.

It is Dumphie who speaks first of the subject that absorbs the thoughts of both.

"Was it this—was it about this woman you wanted to tell me, Louis?—this woman whom you believed to be dead?"

"Yes."

"I guessed so, when Bessy came; and now there is so much I long to say, so much that must be said, words come haltingly. Help me, like the brave fellow you are, as far as in you lies. Tell me what you can—"

"Let me tell it you my own way, and then—I can tell you—all. I am a restless fellow naturally, you know, Dumphie, and can speak better like this."

He rises, pushes back the dark hair from his brow, and begins to walk slowly and steadily from end to end of the room.

Dumphie takes a place by the table, resting his elbow there and shading his eyes with his hand.

"This woman, of whom they have told you, is—what she claims to be—my wife. Three years ago I was told of her death; and I believed the tale. Maybe—

Heaven alone knows—I was too glad to hear it to sift it over-deeply. Maybe—I dare not say it was not so—it seemed the more likely to me since it freed my life from a horrible bond, and chimed in with my will."

"You had suffered?" says Dumphie softly.

"Not only through myself—but through my office. That I should be dragged down seemed a small thing beside the dread that the cause I served should suffer. My work lay in a crowded town, in the Black Country, among the poorest and the most degraded. My heart was theirs; my arms felt strong to lift them. I had the power to win them. My hopes were high, my days full of interests that never flagged. Then came this blight upon my life. I am not the first man who has found his cross too heavy; who has borne it ill; who has failed——"

"How did you fail? Tell me."

"I let her go. Our life together had become unbearable. My work was hindered, my grasp upon my people slackened. Once she came helplessly drunk to church; and I saw men jeer and laugh at the man who set himself to save others, yet could not control his own wife. I was mad that night, I think. My own helplessness against her cunning seemed a burden too heavy to be borne. I wandered miles and miles along the desolate Black Country roads. I cried to the Heaven that seemed deaf to all my prayers. When I reached my home and saw her lying in her sodden sleep, I knew what it was for a man to have murder in his heart. When I had beaten down this mad impulse, such a sense of loathing came upon me that it seemed as if any fate—no matter what—that should separate me from the woman who cursed my life, would be welcome; even death itself——"

He stands by the window a moment, and the sunlight falls upon his noble, stricken face.

Dumphie, looking up, cannot repress a groan at sight of the ruin which the man's own sorrow, and another's sin, have wrought.

In an instant, Louis Draycott is by his side.

"You are so good—so good to me," he says; and the voice that has told that bitter story all unflinchingly, trembles at the touch of sympathy. "I longed for you to be near me in the night, that I have watched through—I know not how—alone."

"I wish—I wish I could have come," replies the other.

Then he shakes himself together, and, taking his courage by both hands, puts a question.

"Tell me," he says, "how did this—marriage come about?"

For the life of him he cannot help hesitating a moment before he brings out the word "marriage." He is half afraid that Louis may not like the question to be put; and yet it is best he should know. It is best he should be armed at all points, and so be ready to guide, and help, and comfort.

"Looking back now, it is hard to me to say how it came about. She, my wife, was the sister of my first Rector. She led a lonely sort of life, and I tried to be kind to her. Any deeper thought of her was far enough from me, Heaven knows. I never loved her, then, or at any future time—not, that is, as a man should love the woman he marries. I was sorry for her. Her brother, I soon found out to be one of the Church's hard bargains—a bad, disolute man. And he was unkind to her."

"In a word, you fell into a trap?"

"It may be so. At all events, I earnestly believed myself to be right in what I did. I—saw no other way."

"The woman told you, or let you see that she—loved you?"

Again comes the little hesitation in Dumphie's voice.

"She sent for me, after we had known each other some time, and I had tried to help her in any way I could. She told me that in the lonely, isolated life she led, I had stood for all the brightness that had been so long lacking. She asked me if it was only her fancy, or, if I had really been changed to her of late—colder, less interested in her troubles and trials. She came close up to me, her face deathly pale, her hands twisting nervously the one in the other, and then, all at once she broke out into a passion and torrent of tears. The Rector, coming in at the moment, and taking in, as he thought, the state of matters at a glance, grasped me by the hand and told me——"

"Yes, yes," says Dumphie, impatiently, with a restless shake peculiar to him when irritated, "I understand. It is all plain enough to me now."

There is a little silence after this.

Then, once again, Louis Draycott begins to pace the room. Once again, in low, even tones, that tell of resolute self-re-

pression, he continues the story of the past.

"I had some warning, but it fell on deaf ears. There was an old servant who had lived in the Rector's family for years. She met me one day in the garden. 'Is it true, sir,' she said, 'that you are going to marry Miss Rebecca?' I said, 'Yes; it was quite true, and our marriage day was fixed upon.' For all answer she turned aside, wringing her hands, and crying out that it was 'no doing of hers—no doing of hers,' and so left me. 'Jealous,' I thought to myself, with a smile; 'it is often the way with old servants.' I told Rebecca all the truth: how I had known but little of women, and surely never loved one woman, so that the world held for me no other. I told her that I could make no protestation of passionate devotion; was conscious of none; but that I would try and brighten her life; strive to cherish and protect her, and stand between her and sorrow. She said she was quite content; that to get away from her home troubles would be heaven to her. Shortly after this we were married, and left for the new curacy in the Black Country, which I had by this time been fortunate enough to get. I knew the man I was going to work under. I knew myself—or thought I did—and was full of hope that my work would fill my own heart and life and help the lives of others—"

He stops a moment, drawing a long, deep breath.

"Do not tell me any more," cries Dumphie, sorely troubled; "I do not want to know any more. You have told me enough—more than enough."

"Nay; let me go on. It is only right and just to—others—that you should know all: how I suffered, how I failed. There were kindly people in the busy, crowded town where we had made our home, and many were ardent to show me and my wife all possible kindness. But, as time went on, there seemed something strange about it all. Kind, good women called upon my wife; at first were cordial; but I noticed that none of those little intimacies grew up between them, none of those pleasant friendships between woman and woman that are such bright spots in many a life. And more than once people were odd in their ways to me: pitied me—or I fancied so. It gave me grave concern to see my wife's health so fluctuating. I had thought to find in her a fellow-worker, a friend, companion, help-

meet; but in all this she failed me. At last she became so ill and restless that I called in a doctor—much against her will. After he had seen her he came to my study. When he left me I knew what was the blight that lay upon my life and work. For a time I tried, resolutely, to stand against it all—to do my best for her—to watch her—to guard her from herself; but she outwitted me—she degraded me in the eyes of my people and in my own. My good resolves vanished—my heart slackened and fainted within me. Then came a day when my Rector, a man whom I had grown to love and revere almost as a father, sent for me, and with the deepest tenderness, the kindest sorrow, told me that things could not go on as they were—the scandal was too great. I must go. . . .

"I was desperate that day, and let my wife see into some of the black depths of bitterness and hatred that had gathered in my erring heart.

"Let me go," she cried, defying my reproaches; 'you hate me, and I hate your spying on me—your eternal watch—your "care," as you call it— Let me go!'

"In the end she went. That I struggled against the fierceness of the temptation to let her drift from my life, I would fain hope and believe; that the temptation overcame me at last, we know. I made all arrangements for Rebecca's comfort. We had separate means of our own. There was no difficulty about that. The old servant, of whom I told you before, went with her, and they settled in a village in Normandy; for nothing would induce my wife to remain what she called 'within reach' of me. Her brother, then under sentence of suspension for his evil life, wrote me an outspoken, indignant letter, in which he compared me to a serpent who had stolen into the 'sanctuary of a happy home,' and was kind enough to lay the weight of all his own shortcomings and misfortunes upon my shoulders.

"When, a year later, the news of my wife's death reached me, the sense of freedom was at first all I was conscious of; but, as time went on, I saw things in a truer light. I saw how terribly I had failed. I threw myself into hard work here. I spared myself in nothing. I thought to expiate the failure of the past by the incessant toil of the present. My time here has been a happy one. I have felt that my work among the sinful and the weary has been blest. I have tried to

feel that in that blessing has lain God's pardon for the past. . . .

"Thus I lived on; and then the strain slackened. I believed myself free. I worked harder, more heartfully. I grew more tender and more loving to the sad ones around me. The old regret never died out—how should it?—but the light-heartedness came back to me. This new life has often seemed to me, looking back, as but the forerunner of these last months of hope and happiness—these precious days that have been mine since first I knew you and Aunt Dacie; since first I realised, and more than realised, all my highest ideal of what is possible to womanhood. I have often felt, when my content has been the deepest—how ill I, Louis Draycott, deserved such gifts of Heaven—always felt that I was, in some sort, unworthy, since I had failed—failed in the past. . . ."

"You deal too hardly with yourself," says Dumphie, "far too hardly." Then, reading between the lines clearly enough to see that this aspect of the question is best left alone for ever, he hurries on.

"What can have been this woman's motive in leading you to believe in her own death?"

"She told me that last night: she said she wanted to feel rid of me for ever. From the first she planned and plotted to make this an easy thing, by changing names and identity with her companion——"

"Who died?"

"Yes; and was buried in the little Protestant graveyard——"

"What then brought—your wife—to England?"

"Left alone, she—drifted—fell into bad ways—Ah, dear Heaven! is this burden on my soul, too? I—who might have held her back—let her go."

Hitherto, there is one subject that has never been touched upon by either of the two men. Of course, Dumphie is the one to take the difficult step.

"Now—we must think of Mazie."

"Think of her?"

"Yes, yes; I know. But what I mean is, we must speak out about her. We must resolve—we two who love her so dearly, who would shield her from all sorrow if we could. What is to be done?"

"If we could! How helpless am I now! I who thought to make the girdle of my arms her shield and buckler as long, as Heaven should give me life, and spare her to me!"

Again that restless pacing to and fro, that long-drawn sigh that seems like to rend the breast where sorrow sits enthroned.

Dumphie watches the other keenly. He has that to tell which shall rend in the telling, yet which must hold some balm of healing, some small speck of comfort.

"You will see her—to-day?"

Louis Draycott stops short in his restless walk; stands by the writing-desk, and leans his hand heavily—for his head reels—upon the page of the open diary lying there.

"Yes—but—how to tell her?"

"She knows already."

"You told her! You!"

"Yes. I thought I could at all events spare you that pain."

The man before him is gasping now. He might have been running a race in which every nerve and sinew had been tried to the uttermost. His face is white, his eyes wild and staring.

"Tell me," he sobs out, "tell me—how did she bear it?"

"At first I thought I had killed her. She lay as one dead and lifeless in my arms. But—as I kissed her, as my tears fell upon her face—she lifted her head from my breast; she clung about my neck. 'Go to him,' she cried; 'go to him and tell him that I know—tell him that this may part our lives—his and mine—but not our hearts—not our hearts. . . .'"

A man upon his knees weeping like a woman; a man's tears—those terrible, burning drops wrung forth only by extremity of pain—a man's agonised sobs, mocking the brightness of the sunshine that falls upon his bowed, dark head!

Can Dumphie ever forget?

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